



The Middle East Partnership Initiative

Quick Support Helps Give Regional Voters a Voice in Political Process

November 2005

In just a few short years, the Middle East has become one of the most dynamic political regions in the world. In historic elections during 2005, citizens have gone to the polls in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and Egypt. In Kuwait, women secured the right to vote in the 2007 elections, and Saudi Arabian officials have indicated that women will vote in the next cycle of local elections. In 2006 and 2007, citizens of Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian territories and Yemen will return to polling stations for new rounds of municipal and parliamentary elections.

The President of the United States has promised that the United States will stand with citizens seeking to exercise fundamental democratic rights. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a vital arm for democracy promotion of the U.S. government, is playing an active role in bolstering citizen activism for political inclusiveness.

MEPI Supports Electoral Transparency in Egypt: The Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of nine Egyptian NGOs spearheaded by the Ibn Khaldun Center, fielded 2,500 domestic monitors across Egypt for the country's first multi-candidate presidential election on September 9, 2005.

Rapid Responses by MEPI included:

- Voter education campaigns
- Youth leadership training
- Domestic election monitoring
- Pre- and post-election surveys
- Electoral reform support
- Political candidate training

In the most monitored elections in Egypt's history, ICEM, with an expanded network of 16 NGOs, and an additional effort led by the Egyptian Association for Supporting Democratic Developments fielded over 5,000 monitors nationwide for parliamentary elections beginning in November. For both sets of elections,

the monitoring programs and reporting covered the period prior to and after the actual voting day, including monitoring of the registration process, media coverage, the campaign, and the ballot count.

MEPI Supports Lebanese Electoral Processes and Popular Participation: In the period prior to Lebanon's first elections in a generation free of foreign oversight, MEPI provided timely assistance to local democracy efforts. Through support to local NGOs, MEPI programs for voter education, public opinion polling, domestic monitoring, and youth and women's participation gave further impetus to the public demand for change generated by the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005 and the resulting public outcry.

In the post-election period in Lebanon, MEPI efforts are aimed at sustaining the momentum for change and aiding political leaders and civil society actors as they begin the process of reforming political processes, including the electoral system, for the benefit of all Lebanese.

MEPI is a Presidential initiative that supports economic, political, and educational reform efforts and women's empowerment in the Middle East and expanded opportunity for all people of the region.

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